Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BRUSSE 08610 031717Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
EB-08 OMB-01 TRSY-02 ACDA-12 DOE-15 SOE-02 STR-07
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FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6371

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 08610

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, BE
SUBJECT: COMMENTS ON SIMONET'S APRIL 26 REMARKS TO PARLIAMENT

REF: BRUSSELS 8531

1. THE CONTINUING PLIGHT OF THE DOLLAR HAS INCREASED SUPPORT WITHIN THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT FOR EFFORTS AT REFORM OF EC AND GLOBAL INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL POLICIES. BUT SIMONET IS THE ONLY MINISTER OR OFFICIAL WHO HAS CHOSEN PUBLICLY TO PORTRAY THE SCHMIDT INITIATIVE AS PRIMARILY A MEANS OF BRINGING THE U.S. TO HEEL. NEITHER TINDEMANS, THE FINANCE MINISTRY NOR THE NATIONAL BANK HAS CHANGED FROM AN ATTITUDE OF EUROPEAN COOPERATION OR AT LEAST COORDINATION WITH THE U.S. TO ONE OF CONFRONTATION - SUCH AS SIMONET'S CURRENT POSTURE IMPLIES. ALTHOUGH THERE MAY BE SOME INTERNAL DIFFERENCES OF OPINION OR EMPHASIS - BANK GOVERNOR DE STRYCKER IS REPORTED TO FAVOR CLOSE COORDINATION OF EC AND WIDER INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS, WHILE FINANCE MINISTRY APPEARS MORE EAGER TO PRESS AHEAD IMMEDIATELY AT THE EC LEVEL (BRUSSELS 7176 CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BRUSSE 08610 031717Z

AND 8156) - BOTH INSTITUTIONS HAVE STRESSED THE POSITIVE BENEFITS WHICH COULD FLOW FROM IMPROVED EC MONETARY POLICY BOTH FOR THE U.S. AND THE WORLD ECONOMY IN GENERAL. IT IS THESE FINANCE MINISTRY AND NATIONAL BANK OFFICIALS, NOT THE FOREIGN MINISTER, WHO TRADITIONALLY MAKE BELGIAN INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL POLICY AND WE SEE LITTLE PROSPECT THAT THIS WILL CHANGE IN

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THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE.

2. SIMONET'S REMARKS ON THE ERW RING SOMEWHAT HOLLOWLY TO THOSE WHO WERE PRIVY TO BELGIAN DECISION-MAKING ON ERW. THE PARLIAMENTARIANS TO WHOM SIMONET ADDRESSED HIS REMARKS WERE NOT, AND SO SIMONET WAS ABLE TO STRIKE A POSTURE AS A WISE STATESMAN LECTURING THE U.S.G . HAD THE PRESIDENT'S DECISION ON ERW NOT SAVED THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT FROM TAKING A DECISION THIS SPRING, SIMONET'S REMARKS WOULD HAVE HAD TO BE QUITE DIFFERENT IN TONE.

3. SIMONET IS, AND IS APT TO REMAIN FOR SOME TIME, BELGIAN FOREIGN MINISTER. HE IS AN IMAGINATIVE, HYPER-ACTIVE, AMBITIOUS AND INTELLIGENT MAN. HE ALSO HAS A TOUCH OF THE SHOWMAN AND POSSESSES AN UNSCRUPULOUS STREAK. IN THE REMARKS HE MADE TO PARLIAMENT, WHICH WERE INTENDED FOR INTERNAL CONSUMPTION, SOME OF THE LATTER TENDENCIES CAME OUT. SIMONET MAY HAVE AMBITIONS TO BECOME SOCIALIST PRIME MINISTER SOMEDAY. HIS CHANCES OF DOING SO ARE NOT PARTICULARLY BRIGHT, GIVEN THE STRUCTURE OF PRESENT BELGIAN POLITICAL FORCES (HEAVILY WEIGHTED IN FAVOR OF FLEMISH CATHOLICS) AND THE LINEUP OF POWER WITHIN THE SOCIALIST PARTY. SIMONET'S CAREER HAS QUITE PROBABLY PEAKED IN HIS PRESENT JOB. WE CAN EXPECT HIM THEREFORE TO DO ALL
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PAGE 03 BRUSSE 08610 031717Z

HE CAN TO REMAIN FOREIGN MINISTER IN A COALITION GOVERNMENT HEADED BY A PRIME MINISTER OF ANOTHER PARTY. HE WILL TRY TO ESTABLISH AND MAINTAIN DAYLIGHT BETWEEN HIMSELF AND THE PRIME MINISTER, BUT WITHIN TOLERABLE LIMITS. THIS SPEECH, AS WELL AS THE ONE REPORTED IN BRUSSELS 7366, ARE EXAMPLES OF SIMONET'S FREE-WHEELING WITHIN THESE LIMITS. OLSEN

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20 Mar 2014
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